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REVIEWS OF BOOKS

GENERAL BOOKS AND BOOKS OF ANCIENT HISTORY

The Maintenance of Peace. By S. C. VESTAL, formerly Colonel, 339th Field Artillery, National Army. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1920. Pp. xiv, 584. \$5.00.)

THIS is a book neither lightly to be taken up nor lightly to be put aside. It is too long and too cumbrous in its arrangement. Its bulk consists of that terror of the historian, a history of the world constructed to point to a particular moral, sections of which rest thinly upon inadequate material, as the chapter on the Incas, which is described as a "*précis* of Book I. of Prescott's *Conquest of Peru*" (p. 56). It is frequently careless in details, as when Lubbock is described as writing of spiders and Fabre of ants (p. 5), or Washington as leading an army in the field to suppress a rebellion in Pennsylvania (p. 20). But it is founded on broad reading, on deep and earnest thought, and contains much common sense. Its theoretical portions are far inferior to its historical.

The central idea of the historical review is to trace the fate of the "balance of power". By this term, which he considers inadequate, Colonel Vestal means not equal balance, but the preponderant balance of smaller or maritime states against land powers seeking world control. Equipoise, or equal balance, the condition existing before the late war, he regards as the greatest menace of peace, but a true balance as the surest bulwark against war. In periods when such a balance has existed he finds conditions favoring the maintenance of peace. Attempts at world empire have proved unsuccessful, or if successful within the range of endeavor, as in the case of the Incas, stagnating. Attempts at confederation, such as the Holy Roman Empire, the Papacy, and the Holy Alliance, have proved abortive. Federation, which he defines as a supergovernment resting and operating directly upon the individual citizens of the several states which comprise the federation, he considers at present impossible, whether it be desirable or not. He believes then that the foundations of peace rest upon the existence in the world of strong nations, with strong boundaries, united, either in purpose, or by common declarations, or even by mutual treaties, to oppose the dominance of any one nation. He believes that democracy is the strongest basis for domestic peace, but he points out, in the best-constructed portion of the book, that domestic peace has nowhere long existed without the maintenance of armed forces.

The greatest weakness of his discussion is, as is true of all such discussions, not vulgar inaccuracy, but simplicity. He discards all

forces except that which he believes to be dominant, which may be described as that of nationality. He fails to mention such vital things as the force of example, of law, either domestic or international, of religion, and barely admits that of economics. His history, moreover, is static, and he feels no real movement in the world. He idealizes the particular force, that Balance which he selects as the world's peace-maker; saying for instance: "No victorious coalition formed for defence against a strong usurping power has ever dismembered the defeated state or wantonly abused its victory in any way" (p. 108). One seeks without result for an explanation of how the force of the majority, which in the case of nations is transmuted into power by organization, is, in the case of the world, to become power, without organization.

But how many of the reviews of history which have of late years been put forward to point the finger of the past directly toward a "Parliament of Man", have been without similar defects? Most of them were the work of men earnestly hoping that a world league would come, and reviewing the past to convince themselves and others that it was possible. This is a review by a man who believes such a league impossible, and who has sought in history some other solution for the problem of peace. It is not as historical works that such books are to be evaluated, but as contributions to thought, and the function of the historical reviewer is to pass his opinion on, so to speak, the historical grammar. Practically none of these books show authoritative powers of historical interpretation, though many are suggestively interpretive, and none more so than this. Colonel Vestal, as compared with the others, shows a medium degree of accuracy, but quite the widest scope and broadest background of any with which the reviewer is acquainted. His facts, moreover, are facts that most of the others disregard, and by combining his book with some on the other side, a chance for a comprehensive view and a real personal interpretation of the foundations of peace is afforded, which the average reader might not get by a first-hand reading of sounder general histories. Colonel Vestal, moreover, displays an intellectual activity in his comments which is refreshing, and six pages of quotations from Demosthenes would give distinction to any book (p. 146-150). Quite apart from its use of history, the book deserves consideration for its constructive ideas with regard to peace. Its destructive analysis of other proposals now current is almost too ill-natured to be useful.

CARL RUSSELL FISH.

The Writing of History: an Introduction to Historical Method. By FRED M. FLING, Ph.D., Professor of European History in the University of Nebraska. (New Haven: Yale University Press. 1920. Pp. 195. \$2.00.)

IN this little book Professor Fling offers an instructive guide to the student within or without coll ge walls who desires to learn by experi-